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ANGLICAN COUNCIL EXPLORES DIVERSITY

QUEBEC CITY, Canada -- The contemporary meaning of people and nation was the central theme of the eleventh annual meeting of the Anglican Council of North America and the Caribbean, an inter-Anglican body representing the Episcopal Church, the Anglican Church of Canada and the Church in the Province of the West Indies.

Quebec City was chosen for being a "laboratory" of the Canadian experience in the midst of this vast region of French Canada.

In reflecting on the meaning of nation, Euline Arthur, a Canadian citizen who left her native Barbados 32 years ago, said that she does not feel like a "real Canadian" because she still is "not able to obtain certain jobs or live in certain places."

The Rev. Gilles Blouin, ecumenical officer for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Quebec, said that for a French Canadian it is difficult "to live in a country where the government and the finances are controlled by people who seem to believe that they are the only Canadians."

The Rt. Rev. Clive O. Abdulah, Bishop of Trinidad and Tobago, said that the members of the Church need to understand the meaning of what it is to be the people of God wherever they are.

"Our faith is not centered in a place or a nation, but in the God who calls us to be his witnesses wherever we are," said Bishop Abdulah. He added that the frequent strong attachment of the people to a certain church building or place is a distortion of the faith in the God who reveals himself everywhere.

The Rev. Jack Porter, of Lafayette, Ind., chairman of the Anglican Council, said that as a result of the great masses of people who move from one place to another "we all lack a sense of identity and have become rootless."

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He suggested that the Church must discover how best to minister to people on the move, who no longer have roots in a certain location. He said that his average parishioner stays only 18 months in the parish. "With this constant change, family and friends are absent many times in the real moments of life. The Church must produce the kind of Christian community where all people feel that they belong no matter where they come from," he added.

Bishop Abdulah pointed out that the real theological question is "not where we come from, but who we are."

The Rev. Donald Wilson, of Baltimore, said that the Church does not minister to the pluralistic society that has become the norm almost everywhere, but only to small segments of that society. He added that, in his experience, when "minorities become a threat to the establishment, they are no longer welcome."

The Rt. Rev. John Bothwell, Bishop of Hamilton, Canada, said that the Church needs "more conflict, fair conflict" that will enable the members of the Church to understand the problems of poverty, unemployment and oppression. "Even when we have gone through difficult times, we still do not know the meaning of what it is to be poor and oppressed; the Church needs to experience the joy of sharing and witnessing for justice," he added.

This is not the first time that the Council has dealt with issues of this nature. In the past it has studied the situation of West Indian immigrants in Canada and the United States and their social condition. The theological response to the Caribbean economy which is controlled in great measure by big transnational corporations, was the theme of the 1979 annual conference held in Miami.

Next year it will study the city, as it is presented in the Bible and in reality, with the purpose of discovering the nature of the ministry in the urban society and the role of the church in it. The conference is scheduled for late spring in Detroit.

In a business session following the conference, the Anglican Council:

- Expressed concern for the plight of immigrant workers in the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- Proposed the celebration of an Anglican Congress for the Western Hemisphere

in the not too distant future.

- Decided to review the companion diocesan relationships to see if they are consonant with the spirit of Partners in Mission and to assess the positive effects on the companions.

● Urged the Episcopal Church to give serious consideration to the work of the Church in Venezuela and to accept metropolitan responsibility for this South American jurisdiction.

The Episcopal Church is contributing \$17,000 in 1980 to the work of the Anglican Council which has a total budget of \$31,700.

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